

5-4-2021

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Recommended Citation

University of Dayton, "Graduation for the ages: Record-breaking number of graduates in six ceremonies includes first class of Flyer Promise Scholars" (2021). *News Releases*. 11478.
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TUESDAY MAY 4, 2021

Graduation for the ages: Record-breaking number of graduates in six ceremonies includes first class of Flyer Promise Scholars

The University of Dayton is set to confer a record number of degrees for undergraduates and total graduates in six in-person ceremonies at UD Arena this weekend aligned with safety guidelines and allow students and their invited guests to celebrate academic achievements in the Flyer spirit and tradition.

Among the approximately 1,670 undergraduates receiving degrees will be the first Flyer Promise Scholars — cementing the success of the program created to remove financial barriers and offer support for underrepresented and underserved students. The first class of 40 academically talented undergraduates includes many who never considered applying to UD before Flyer Promise because they saw the University as financially out of reach. The program, designed for seniors at partner high schools who are eligible for the need-based federal Pell Grant, provides significant university- and donor-funded scholarships and grant assistance, along with mentoring, leadership opportunities and other support.

"I am so proud of each and every student for what they have accomplished," said Dean of Admission Donnell Wiggins, who oversees the program. "They have persevered through ups and downs; they have changed our campus for the better by starting new organizations like our first Hispanic fraternity; they have served as resident advisers, peer mentors and president's emissaries; and some have even secured job offers months before graduation. They are change agents. They're going to influence the world in a meaningful way."

Dezaneé Bluthenthal, who will be a first-generation college graduate, was among those who did not picture herself as a

UD student. Bluthenthal, a Dayton Early College Academy graduate, said within her first week on campus, she felt she "had a family" in Flyer Promise. She points to support the program provided during difficult times, including when her family was temporarily homeless during a holiday break and she did not have a place to stay, and when her grandfather died. [Read more student stories in the *University of Dayton Magazine*.](#)

The [School of Law](#) (1-2:30 p.m.) and all [other graduate programs](#) (6-7:30 p.m.) will graduate in separate ceremonies Friday, May 7. The College of Arts and Sciences, UD's largest school, will hold two ceremonies at [9-10:30 a.m.](#) and [1:30-3 p.m.](#) Saturday, May 8. Students in the schools of [Education and Health Sciences and Engineering](#) will graduate together 9-10:30 a.m. Sunday, May 9. [School of Business Administration](#) students will graduate 1:30-3 p.m. May 9. ROTC will hold its commissioning at noon May 8.

Overall, UD expects to confer approximately 2,150 degrees this weekend, eclipsing last year's mark of approximately 2,100. The undergraduate mark exceeds the 1,513 degrees conferred in May 2018.

[Baccalaureate Mass will be held at 6 p.m. May 8](#) in the UD Arena. Tickets for limited seating also will be required and registration information will be forthcoming.

All ceremonies and the baccalaureate Mass will be streamed live; links are embedded above.

Ceremonies will look much different than in past years, according to Gretchen Theil, UD registrar coordinator. Students will not process into the arena and there will be an abbreviated procession of essential UD support staff. There will be very limited interaction between students and staff; there will be no handshakes. Ceremonies are limited to 90 minutes to allow for required cleaning and set-up for the next ceremony. Students are limited to four guests who will be required to follow safety guidelines, including wearing face coverings. Seats will be assigned and tickets will be required to enter UD Arena.

"I cannot say enough about those across the university who are coming together to make this weekend happen. I'm so thankful for our staff in the registrar's office and Flyer Student Services as well as the staff in the provost's office and UD Arena, and countless others. Everyone has been so kind and patient," Theil said. "It is a testament to all of them that we are able to hold in-person graduation ceremonies with families present."

UD Arena is the University's traditional venue for commencement ceremonies. Holding this year's ceremonies there was a natural choice considering the UD Division of Athletics' work and success with seating arrangements, ticketing and public health considerations during the Dayton Flyers' men's and women's basketball seasons and Ohio High School Athletic Association state basketball tournament games.

"While we would love to be together under one roof at the same time, hosting the smaller ceremonies allows us to offer a weatherproof facility with excellent accessibility, sound and video capabilities, and an experienced team well-versed in working under public health guidelines," President Eric F. Spina and Provost Paul H. Benson said in a message to students announcing the ceremonies.

[More information about graduation 2021 is available here.](#)

For more information or interviews, contact University of Dayton News and Communications at mediarelations@udayton.edu.

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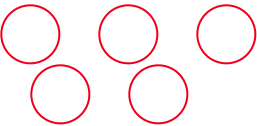
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